

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13
HA-05 MCT-01 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 COME-00 /099 W
-----109171 131145Z /16

R 122222Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7667
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 1753

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, ES
SUBJECT: PEASANT UNREST AND RURAL VIOLENCE IN EL SALVADOR

REF: SAN SALVADOR 1576

1. COUNTRYSIDE VIOLENCE AS REPORTED REFTEL AND ELSEWHERE SEEMS CONSIDERABLY MORE COMPLICATED THAN GOVERNMENT, OPPOSITION OR INDIVIDUAL PRESS VERSIONS WOULD INDICATE. UNCERTAIN BUT SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF DEAD, WOUNDED AND DISPLACED PERSONS, COUPLED WITH EVIDENCE THAT SIMILAR OUTBREAKS COULD EASILY ERUPT ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, SUGGEST TO US RATHER STRONGLY THAT EL SALVADOR FACES A TROUBLED FUTURE.

2. UNBIASED SOURCES ARE VERY HARD TO COME BY. BUT TO THE EXTENT WE WORK IN THAT DIRECTION, WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE SEEMS TO BE SHIFTING TO PLACE INITIATIVE AND
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CULPABILITY FOR SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AND RELATED EVENTS OF VIOLENCE UPON PRO-GOVERNMENT FORCES. ORIGINAL MOVERS WERE PROBABLY MEMBERS OF ORDEN, A RURAL PEASANT ORGANIZATION OPERATING LARGELY UNDER MILITARY ORDERS AND CONTROL, AND OF THE MILITARY'S "TERRITORIAL SERVICE" (OFTEN CONFUSED ONE WITH THE OTHER), WHO MOVED AGAINST FECCAS/UTC/BPR ELEMENTS IN RURAL AREA. WHEN SURPRISING RESISTANCE AND

COUNTERVIOLENCE WERE ENCOUNTERED, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT ORDEN FORCES WITHDREW, GOES PROPAGANDA MACHINE TREATED THIS AS A VIOLENT DISPLACEMENT OF INNOCENT PEASANTS, AND SECURITY FORCES WERE SENT IN TO RESTORE ORDER. ANTI-GOES ELEMENTS MAINTAIN THAT THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY WIDESPREAD FILLING OF FECCAS/UTC/BPR LEADERS.

3. WHETHER OR NOT THIS VERSION IS ACCURATE, AND WE TEND TO BELIEVE THERE MAY WELL BE TRUTH IN IT, ITS WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE BY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS RANGING FROM CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO FAR-LEFT EXTREMEISTS SUCH AS FPL IS COLORING AND HARDENING ATTITUDES TOWARD THE GOES. NOT ONLY WILL ORDEN BE REVISITED AND FOUGHT MORE VIGOROUSLY BUT THERE IS LIKELY ALSO TO BE AN INCREASING TENDENCY TOWARD EXTREMIST VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM AS FORMS OF RETALIATION.

4. EVEN THE GOVERNMENT'S MOTIVATION IS A COMPLEX MATTER. AS ONE OF THE FEW TRULY IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS OF THE LOCAL SCENE PUT IT: "WHY WOULD A GOVERNMENT FACING THIS MANY PROBLEMS AND SO DESPERATELY ANXIOUS TO SEEK A RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE CHURCH GO OUT AND START CUTTING OFF PEASANTS' HEADS?" FOR HIM, SUCH LOGIC RAISES A REAL QUESTION AS TO GOES CULPABILITY. WE ARE LESS SURE. IN THE GOES AND ITS SECURITY SERVICES WE ARE FACING A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION AND A PROBABLY HIGH DISPOSITION TOWARD DIRECT ACTION. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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LEGITIMATE OPPOSITION AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM IS VERY SLIGHT FOR MANY PRO-GOVERNMENT SALVADORANS AND NON-EXISTENT FOR OTHERS, PRACTICALLY ALL OF WHOM REMEMBER THE 1932 PEASANT AND COMMUNIST UPRISING AND ARE OBSESSED WITH THE FEAR OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. WE ALSO HAVE AMPLE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT INTERNALLY THE GOES AND ITS SECURITY SERVICES ARE GUILTY OF WITTING OR UNWITTING SELF-DECEPTION, THIS RESULTING IN HIGH-LEVEL MIS-IDENTIFICATION (BASED IN PART ON BAD AND/OR CONTRIVED INTELLIGENCE) OF THE ENEMY AS TOTALLY COMMUNIST-INSPIRED INSURGENCY. FOR THOSE LOWER LEVELS CHARGED WITH TAKING ACTION. UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE IS NOT EASY.

5. IMMEDIATE FUTURE IS NOT PREDICTABLE, BUT PANDORA'S BOX MAY HAVE BEEN OPENED. POTENTIAL FOR MORE VIOLENCE SEEMS CONSIDERABLE. WHILE SOME SOURCES SUGGEST EARLY GOES INITIATIVES AGAINST REAL OR OPPOSED FOES IN STILL OTHER RURAL AREAS, OTHERS BELIEVE REACTION TO DATE MAY HAVE GIVEN GOES PAUSE. LATTER THESIS GAINS SOME SUPPORT FROM INDICATIONS THAT GOES MAY NOW BE CONTEMPLATING PACIFICATION EFFORT THROUGH LARGE-SCALE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO SMALL FARMERS IN TROUBLED AREAS. APART FROM THIS, A SENIOR

CABINET MEMBER HAS ALSO SPOKEN TO US OF PLANS FOR A SIZE-
ABLE REHABILITATION PROGRAM IN SAN PEDRO PERULAPAN AREA

WITH BENEFITS TO BE DISTRIBUTED WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION
AMONG AFFECTED MEMBERS OF ORDEN AND FECCAS/UTC/BPR.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CIVIL DISORDERS, RURAL AREAS, ALLEGATIONS, TERRORISTS, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANS01753
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780159-0033
Format: TEL
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780463/aaaacbbh.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fb033ab1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 SAN SALVADOR 1576
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2987257
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PEASANT UNREST AND RURAL VIOLENCE IN EL SALVADOR
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, ES
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fb033ab1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014